

Mueller House
East side of an unidentified road
3/4 mile north of County Trunk AP,
2-3/4 miles east of Iron Ridge
Iron Ridge Vicinity, Herman Township
Dodge County
Wisconsin

HABS No. WIS-150

HABS
WIS
14-IRON

1-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MUELLER HOUSE

Location: East side of an unidentified road 3/4 mile north of County Trunk AP, 2-3/4 miles east of Iron Ridge, Iron Ridge Vicinity, Herman Township, Dodge County, Wisconsin.

Present Owner: August J. Mueller, Route 1, Mayville, Wis.

Present Occupant: August J. Mueller.

Present Use: Farm storage.

Brief Statement of Significance: The house is a small but typical example of a type of half-timber construction built by early German settlers in Wisconsin prior to the Civil War. The carpenters and joiners who built these were skilled craftsmen trained in Germany and the technique is one practiced there in rural areas since the Middle Ages and known in Germany as Fachwerkbau. Such buildings are unique among pioneer constructions in America and are fast disappearing due to neglect and destruction.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and Subsequent Owners: August J. Mueller purchased the property some time shortly after 1900 from Frank and Otto Liscow. They had acquired the property from Charles Messman some years before. Whether Charles Messman built the building or whether he was the original owner of the property has not been determined.
2. Date of erection: Has not been determined. Based on the little knowledge available, of similar buildings in the area, it was built between 1840 and 1860.
3. Carpenter - Builder: According to August J. Mueller, the present owner, a joiner by the name of William Erchman who died ca. 1900 was active in the locality and may have been the builder.
4. Notes on alterations and additions: Physical evidence indicates that a small ell, probably of wood construction, was added to the west side at some indeterminate date, and has

WIS.
14-IRON
1-

HABS No. WIS-150

MUELLER HOUSE
page 2

since been removed. This entailed some alteration of openings on the west side.

5. Source of Information: Interview with the present owner, August J. Mueller, Route 1, Mayville, Wisconsin.

B. Likely Sources not yet Investigated: The County records of Dodge County in the courthouse at Juneau, Wisconsin, might profitably be searched.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a small but typical building of Fachwerkbau construction, with no strikingly unusual features or details.
2. Condition of fabric: Neglected but generally intact. Most of the former exterior siding has disappeared and the wood ell is missing.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: 20 x 29 feet, 1-1/2 stories.
2. Foundations: Local fieldstone much displaced and patched with cement, brick, and other materials.
3. Wall construction: Heavy frame of 8" x 8" native white oak timbers mortised, tenoned, and pegged. Framing panels filled with 4" of hand-made brick nogging, soft russet in color. Wood clapboards on the exterior may or may not have been original.
4. Chimneys: One small interior chimney of brick supported about 4' above the floor on wood shelf. The chimney contains flue opening only; no fireplace.
5. Openings
 - a. Doorways and doors: Simple rectangular openings with 6-panel doors.
 - b. Windows: Lower floor - double hung, 12-8" x 10" lights. Attic - single sash, 6-9" x 12" lights.

6. Roof

- a. Shape, covering: Gabled roof with shingles on wood sheathing.
- b. Framing: 5" x 5" rafters supported on 7" x 7" cross beams mortised into the frame; gable ends are knee-braced and covered with clapboards; brick nogging does not extend above top plate.
- c. Eaves: Rafters project and have simple boxed eaves.

C. Technical Description of Interiors:

1. Floor plans: Main floor and attic. Main floor has one large and one small room with tiny stair hall at the northeast corner. Attic is a single open area. There is some slight indication of a small basement but this has been filled in and the foundations have been reworked to such an extent that it is difficult to determine the original condition.
2. Stairways: One small exceedingly steep wood stair leading to attic; no hand-rail.
3. Flooring: Wood planking laid over ten inch joists resting directly on foundation walls on the first level and horizontal framing members on the second level.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: First floor is plastered throughout except in stair hall. It cannot be determined what the construction of the main cross partition of the first floor is since it is covered with plaster. Its width of 10" indicates it may be framed similar to the exterior walls. Attic is unfinished.
5. Doorways and doors: One 6-panel door, one board-and-batten; both probably replacements.
6. Trim: Simple 4" trim, no moldings.
7. Hardware: Nothing of interest; crude modern replacements.
8. Lighting: No artificial lighting.
9. Heating: Originally stoves; no fireplaces. (Note: fireplaces are extremely rare in early German houses in Wisconsin).

- D. General setting and orientation: The building faces east with main axis north and south and is part of a typical Wisconsin

WIS
14-IRON.V

HABS No. WIS-150

MUELLER HOUSE
page 4

farm group. The structure now serves as an outbuilding.

Prepared by Henry C. Edwards, Architect
National Park Service - August 1960